fixation of tariffs for Telecom Services including CMTS. As per information furnished by TRAI, Cellular Service Providers are allowed to offer different tariff packages with its approval. The subscribers are at liberty to choose any of the tariff packages on offer as per their requirement / usage pattern.

Provision of village telephones by BSNL and DoT

2367. SHRI RAJU PARMAR:
SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) what has been the precentage of village telephones provided by the public sector BSNL and DoT during the last three years and what is the percentage of telephones installed as against the number of DELs installed from 1998 to 2001;

(b) whether it is a fact that Attorney General of India has opined before migration to the National Telecom Policy, 1999, that two sets of licensing regimes were legally not tenable to the growth of telecom; and

(c) whether Government have accepted this recommendation or continuing with two sets of licenses in the telecom sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) BSNL and erstwhile DoT were providing telephones in urban areas as well as rural areas in the villages during last three years. Total DELs installed is 14.91 million and 17.76 per cent of this DELs are Village Telephones (Rural Area Telephones). Total Village Public Telephones (VPT) provided during last three year is 1,29,057 and this is 44.52% of the target fixed for VPTs during last three years.

(b) and (c) Opinion of the Attorney General was sought by the Government in the context of Government's intention expressed in New Telecom Policy-1999 (NTP-99) to "satisfactorily resolve the problems being faced by the existing operators in a manner which is consistent with the contractual obligations and is legally tenable" (Para 3.11 of NTP-99). The existing operators were facing problems due to high licence fees committed in the bids submitted by them for obtaining the licences. In his opinion the Attorney General had, *inter-alia*, expressed that "continuance of existing

licensees under the 1994 Telecom Policy regime and its enforcement currently with NTP-99 will create problems, which will not be beneficial." It was further opined that migration of licensees to NTP-99 is warranted and that such migration should not be retrospective but from a prospective date to be decided by the Government. It should be ensured that defaulting licensees are not totally absolved of the contractual obligations voluntarily undertaken by them under the Licence Agreements and migration should be subject to certain conditions with regard to payment of arrears of licence fees.

The Government decided migration policy after considering the opinion of the Attorney General, and shifted the existing operators from fixed licence fee regime to revenue sharing regime of the New Telecom Policy-1999; however, their all other contractual obligations, *inter-alia*, roll-out of services, provision of Village Public Telephones etc. remain unchanged.

USO Fund Norms

2368. SHRI RAJU PARMAR:
SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that Universal Service Obligation (USO) Fund Norms have not been finalised by the DoT in tune with the recommendations of the TRAI and NTP 1999;

(b) whether NTP 1999 clearly mentions that USO would be paid for the balance uncovered villages but there is a controversy over USO fund between Government and private sector; and

(c) if so, whether Government are planning to have a relook at USO policy and give incentives in the nature of capital expenditure and operational expenses for providing Village Panchayat Telephones, and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) The Universal Service Obligation (USO) Fund guidelines have been